

FATHER FORGIVE THEM

Luke 23:34

I. WHY DO A SERIES ON HOW TO PRAY?

A. TO SERVE GOD MORE EFFECTIVELY

1. FIVE GOALS

- Share the gospel
- Disciple the next generation
- Touch the city
- Train ministers
- Reach the world

2. EFFECTIVENESS

- **Ph 4:13**—*I can accomplish all things through Him who strengthens me.*
- **Jas 5:16**—*The effectively powerful praying of a righteous person can accomplish much*

B. FOR OUR BENEFIT

1. To know God better
2. To meet our own needs
3. To help others

C. BEING CHRIST-FOLLOWERS

1. Obeying His command—**Lk 18:1**—we should **always pray**—and never lose heart
2. Becoming like their Master—Christ-like
3. Following His example—He prayed continually

II. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT PRAYER

- ❖ **DRAW CLOSE TO GOD—WE HAVE SPECIAL ACCESS—TO “OUR FATHER”**
- ❖ **INTERCEDE URGENTLY FOR AND WITH EVERYONE WE KNOW**
- ❖ **FOR GOD’S PEACE UPON OUR COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORS**
- ❖ **BE INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE AMIDST TURMOIL**
- ❖ **OUR WITNESS WILL BE GODLY AND DIGNIFIED**
- ❖ **FAITHFULLY PROCLAIM CHRIST AS THE TRUTH**
- ❖ **WORK WE WILL EFFECTIVELY RECLAIM THE LOST**
- ❖ **THAT THE FATHER WILL SHOW HIMSELF IN A MIGHTY WAY**
- ❖ **BE HUMBLE—“NOT TO US, O LORD”—GLORIFY HIM ABOVE ALL**
- ❖ **STAND BOLDLY FOR HIS SUPERNATURALITY**
- ❖ **TESTIFY TO HIS HOLINESS—BE HOLY LIKE HIM**
- ❖ **HELP CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN THE HOLY AND THE HUMAN**
- ❖ **CALL UPON NAME OF THE LORD—PROVISION—PROTECTION—SALVATION**
- ❖ **URGENCY ABOUT CHRIST’S RETURN—BEING READY AND WORKING**
- ❖ **HELP BUILD HIS UNIVERSAL KINGDOM—NOT PETTY FIEFDOMS**

- ❖ **BECOME** WHO HE MADE US TO BE—AND **DO** WHAT PLEASURES GOD
- ❖ BE AWARE **HIS HEAVENLY WILL** IS FOUNDATIONAL, ETERNAL AND SUPREME
- ❖ ASK GOD TO KEEP US IN HIS **PERFECT WILL** EVERY STEP OF THE **WAY**
- ❖ ASK GOD TO REVEAL HIS **SPECIFIC PURPOSE** FOR EACH OF US HERE AND NOW
- ❖ HELP GOD ACCOMPLISH HIS **HEAVENLY WILL** ON EARTH
- ❖ WE DON'T WORRY, BUT **RELY** ON GOD FOR **ALL** OUR PROVISION
- ❖ WE DISCOVER WHAT OUR REAL **NEEDS** ARE
- ❖ WE TRUST THAT **GOD TRULY CARES** AND WANTS WHAT IS BEST FOR US
- ❖ WE EXPERIENCE A **SALVATION** THAT **BEGINS** WITH AND IS **SECURED** BY GOD
- ❖ WE **HUMBLE** SEEK GOD'S **FORGIVENESS** TO CANCEL OUR **DEBTS**
- ❖ WE DESIRE GOD'S **PRESENCE** TO CLOSE THE **GAP** AND RESTORE OUR **JOY**

III. SUMMARY OF LAST SERMON—FATHER, FORGIVE US

A. WORD IN LORD'S PRAYER—verse 12a

And forgive us our **trespasses**—OR—And forgive us our **debts**

B. FORIVENESS OF SIN FOCUSES ON DEBT

1. WE SIN AGAINST THREE PERSONS
 - God—Others—Ourselves
2. SIN INVOLVES THREE ASPECTS
 - Violation [action]—Separation [result]—Proliferation [on-going effects]
3. TWO PARTS OF SEPARATION
 - a. Barrier—between us and another person
 - b. Alienation—gap created
 - o Violation **robs**
 - o We 'fall short' of expectation/commitment—break trusting relationship
 - o We incur **debt**—must be repaid to restore relationship

C. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES—“AND FORGIVE US OUT DEBTS”

1. SIN ERECTS A **BARRIER**—RIPS A **GAP** BETWEEN US AND GOD
2. HE IS EVER **PRESENT**—BUT WE'RE **ALIENATED**—BROKEN RELATIONSHIP
3. WE OWE HIM A GREAT **DEBT**—TO WORSHIP, HONOR AND OBEY HIM
4. DEBT CAN BE CANCELED—ONLY BY **CHRIST'S RANSOM**—SON OF MAN/GOD
5. IT IS **GOD'S SALVATION**—NOT OURS—HE GRANTS IT—HE **SECURES** IT
6. ONCE HE RESCUES—HIS '**SALVATION**' IS NOT IN **JEOPARDY**—THOUGH WE SIN

7. ALWAYS HAVE **HOPE**—EVEN IN THE MIDST OF SIN—FOR **FORGIVENESS**
8. COME WITH **HUMILITY** IN **CONFESSION**—BEG GOD’S FORGIVENESS
9. GOD FORGIVES— **REMOVES BARRIER**—**CLOSES GAP**—**RESTORES RELATIONS**
10. THE FATHER **RESTORES THE JOY** OF HIS SALVATION
11. **PRIZE** OF FORGIVENESS = RENEWED AWARENESS OF GOD’S **PRESENCE**

IV. FORGIVING OTHERS—IN THE LORD’S PRAYER

A. WORDING IN PRAYER—verse 12b

as we forgive those who **trespasses** against us—OR—as we forgive our **debtors**

1. Just as in **verse 12a**—here Jesus focuses on **debt** incurred by sin
2. Jesus links divine forgiveness—with human forgiveness

B. PARALLEL TEXT

1. TEXT

Lk 11:4—*And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us*

2. LITERAL TRANSLATION

Lk 11:4—*And forgive us our sins, for **even** we ourselves **are forgiving** everyone who is indebted to us.*

C. TRANSLATION OF MATTHEW’S TEXT

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

1. TENSE—TWO GREEK VERSIONS

- a. “*as we forgive*” = **KJV** based on this Greek version
 1. Closer to Luke’s version
 2. Shows continuous—habitual action—“*as we are forgiving*”
 3. Less reliable version
- b. “*as we have forgiven*” = **NASB/NIV** based on this Greek version
 1. Forgiveness done in past—but not complete
 2. More ‘difficult’—but more reliable version
 3. Raises question about “as”—how the tenses fit
 - o “*Forgive us [now], as we have forgiven*”

2. THE ‘AS’ QUESTION

- a. Literal reading = “**even as we have forgiven**”
- b. Could mean four things
 1. **Comparison** → “**like** we have forgiven”
 - [Forgive us in **same way** we have done it]
 - o **Problem**—we forgive imperfectly—God does it perfectly
 2. **Cause** → “**because** we have forgiven”
 - [Forgive us **as a result of** what we have done]
 - o **Problem**—God does not follow our lead
 - o **Problem**—we don’t earn His forgiveness because of what we do
 3. **Sequence** → “**since** we have forgiven” [
 - [Forgive us **while or after** we have done it]
 - o **Problem**—still suggests God forgives *because* we have forgiven
 4. **Motivation** → “**as such** we have forgiven”
 - [Forgive us—**so** we have done it]
 - o **Best option**—the Father’s forgiveness *motivates* us to forgive
 - o Father’s forgiveness is timeless—and we have followed His example
 - We are the *kind* of people—who do as He does
 - We are *defined* as children of the Father—who forgives

V. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

A. BIBLICAL CONTEXT OF FORGIVENESS

- ❖ DIVINE MOTIVE
- ❖ DIVINE NECESSITY
- ❖ DIVINE WARNING—CONDITION
- ❖ DIVINE PURPOSE

1. DIVINE **MOTIVE** = LOVE
 - a. **Two commands**
 1. He wants us to love Him—“**Love the Lord your God . . .**”
 2. He wants us to love others—“**Love your neighbor as yourself**”
 - b. **Principles—that give us two word pictures**
 1. Love for God comes first—love and forgiveness start here—[vertical relationship]

2. If we truly love God—we love and forgive others—[horizontal relationship]
3. If we hate and do not forgive others—we cannot truly love and serve God

WORD PICTURE = THE CROSS +

4. Interdependence of love—and interconnection of sin
 - a. When we **all** truly love—*αγαπη*
 1. We **all** love God—and *can* love each other—[divine empowerment]
 2. Then we all *do* love each other—and focus mutual love on God—[united base]

WORD PICTURE = TRIANGLE ▲

- b. When we sin—superstructure collapses
 1. We hate *each other*—and cannot love God together—[divided base]
 2. *Each* does not love God—and cannot love others—[no divine power]

2. DIVINE **NECESSITY**—RECONCILIATION

- a. Process
 1. Human sin shatters **both** loves—breaks vertical—and horizontal relationships
 2. We need reconciliation—with *both* God—and others
 3. Process is—mutual—and inseparable
 - a. Reconciliation with God
 - Begins with divine forgiveness—**v12a**
 - Includes reconciling with others—**v12b**
 - b. Reconciliation among ourselves
 - Begins with forgiving others—**v12b**
 - Includes reconciliation with God—**12a**
 4. Personal initiative
 - Must begin with **me**—prompted by God [His Holy Spirit]
 - Don't wait for the other person to initiate—God commands this!
- b. Two Commands—Be Reconciled!
 1. When **I** have sinned [against another]

a. **Mt 5:23-24**—*Therefore if you are presenting your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and go, first be reconciled to your brother, then come and present your offering.*

b. Meaning

- o I owe a debt to the brother
- o I must make it right—restitution
- o Results in brother’s forgiveness—implied

2. When another has sinned [against me]

a. **Mk 11:25**—[after miracle of withered fig tree]—*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against someone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

b. Meaning

- o Someone is indebted to me
- o I don’t wait for them to make it right
- o I forgive them—in prayer to God—without delay

3. Implications—reconciliation

- Initiative—it should always begin with me
- Immediacy—I don’t delay seeking it
- Worship—God connects reconciliation—with divine worship

3. DIVINE **WARNING**—AND **CONDITION**

a. We **must** forgive others—for God to forgive us!

1. Jesus said this twice

a. After Lord’s prayer—Jesus gave this **warning**

Mt 6:14-15—*For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, then your Father in heaven will not forgive your transgressions.*

b. After miracle of fig tree—[above]—Jesus made it a **condition**

Mk 11:25—*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against someone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

2. What kind of ‘condition’?

a. NOT a ‘condition’—that *earns* forgiveness

o Pharisees' legalism—'bean-counting' legalism

o God is not a 'divine score-keeper'

b. INSTEAD

- A 'condition'—that **defines** who we are—as Christ-followers
- A 'condition'—that exhibits our **character**—*how* 'saved' people act habitually

c. Parallel example = FAITH

- Like 'faith'—it does not *earn* salvation—but we can't be saved without it!
- Like 'faith'—it shows *how* 'saved people' receive God's grace
- Like 'faith'—it *defines* us as Christ-followers—who *trust* Him

3. Better translations—tell what Jesus really meant—[in His warning—and condition]

a. **Mt 6:14-15**—*For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if it is more probable that you will not forgive others, then your Father in heaven will not forgive your transgressions*

b. **Mk 11:25**—*And when you might stand praying, if you are holding onto anything against someone, have a habitual attitude that will forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

c. Jesus was condemning a lifestyle of **mercilessness**—ungodly—unforgiving hearts

d. Who cannot be forgiven

- The *kind* of person whose **character** is unforgiving
- Whose **lifestyle** is unmerciful—not having been transformed

e. Opposite of the beatitude

- **Mt 5:7**—*Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy*
- *Unblessed are the unmerciful, for they will receive no mercy*

4. Jesus illustrated this

a. **Parable of Unmerciful Servant**—**Mt 18:23-35**

- Master forgave servant—owed 10,000 *talents* = 150,000 *years* wages!
- Servant did not forgive another—owed 100 *denarii* = 100 *days* wages
- Master handed over the first servant for punishment

b. Lesson

Mt 18:35—*My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you will not forgive his brother from your heart.*

4. DIVINE **PURPOSE**

A. **NOT**—TO UNDO THE VIOLATION OR DISMISS THE HARM DONE

B. **NOT**—TO STOP RIPPLING EFFECTS OF SIN ALREADY COMMITTED

C. **NOT**—TO TRIVIALIZE SIN—EASY FORGIVENESS

1. Easy forgiveness—‘tolerates’ sin—promotes and encourages more sin

2. The Father’s forgiveness is not superficial—He doesn’t just cover it up

○ **God is not a divine cosmetician—not a redecorator—not a paper-hanger**

○ **EXAMPLE: papering over cracks in a wall**

○ **Real need = fix foundation**

D. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS——IS FOUNDATIONAL

- Pays **my** debt
- Heals the breach—reconcile **me** with God
- Restores **my** relationship—with God
- Reconciles **us** to each **other**
- Restores **our** triangular  **fellowship**—between God and each other

SO—LET’S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CROSS!

B. JESUS MODELED SUPREME EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS—**Luke 23:34**

Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.

1. MEANING

a. His plea = urgent—complete—unconditional

*“Father, forgive them **now—at once—fully**”*

b. Their action = was habitually ignorant—mindlessly going through motions

“for they have not known what they are in the process of doing”

2. JESUS FORGAVE—IN THREE WAYS

- ❖ **Personally**
- ❖ **Repeatedly**
- ❖ **Intercessorily**

a. He **personally** forgave sin [Himself]—and scandalized religious leaders

EXAMPLE: Jesus’ healing the paralytic—quote—**Mk 2:1-12**

b. He forgave **repeatedly**—without end

1. Teaching—**Parable of Unmerciful Servant**—context:
 - a. Peter’s question—“*How many times shall I forgive my brother’s sins—seven?*”
 - b. Jesus’ answer—“*Seventy times seven*”

2. Lifestyle—He continuously—patiently—forgave disciples—even when frustrated

Mk 9:19—*O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? **Bring him to me!***—[then he healed the boy!!!]

3. Thoroughly—on the cross
 - Forgave habitual ignorance—and mindless murder
 - Forgave all the way—to the very end!
 - He “**was saying** *Father forgive them*”—repeatedly—as they continued
 - Gambling and dividing His clothes
 - Daring Him to come down and save Himself
 - Hanging up His death notice
 - Mocking and rebuking Him
 - **Jesus’ forgiveness—converted one of the robbers!**
 - In **Matthew and Mark**—both robbers heaped insults on Jesus
 - In **Luke**—one robber rebukes the other—and follows Jesus
 - Key difference—Jesus’ forgiveness [Luke]—converted him!
 - “*It is finished*”—paid for **all sin**—for **all people**—for **all time**

- c. He **interceded** with the Father

1. Went the “**extra mile**”—beyond personal forgiveness
2. Showed **sincerity**—and depth of His **love**
3. Fulfilled—His **priestly role**
 - As **intercessor**: Bringing them to God—and God to them
 - He **did what they could not do for** themselves—because of their blindness
 - Restored **full fellowship** triangle—forgiveness between God and others
4. Affirmed—His own Prayer
 - Trusted—that the Father *will* forgive the debt

VI. APPLICATION

1. **NO DEBT IS TOO BIG**—NO SIN IS SO GREAT—THAT IT CANNOT BE FORGIVEN

- **Look at the cross—the Father can even the murder of His own Son**

2. IF WE EXPECT TO BE FORGIVEN—WE MUST **BE FORGIVING PEOPLE**—LIKE CHRIST
3. OUR MINISTRY OF **RECONCILIATION**
 - a. Includes our **priestly** role of **intercession**
 - b. If we really **love our neighbors**
 1. We must **forgive** them
 2. But remember **our forgiveness does not save** them
 3. We must go the extra mile—and **ask God to forgive** them
 4. When they know we intercede for them—they may be drawn to Him—and be saved
 - c. **Seek to restore** *their* relationship with God
 1. Close the gap between them and Him
 2. So they will be saved
 3. So our relationship with them can be healed
 4. So the full fellowship will be restored → God—myself—others

VII. INVITATION

I THEN SHALL LIVE

**I then shall live as one who's been forgiven;
 I'll walk with joy to know my debts are paid.
 I know my name is clear before my Father;
 I am His child, and I am not afraid.
 So greatly pardoned, I'll forgive my brother,
 The law of love I gladly will obey.**

**I then shall live as one who's learned compassion;
 I've been so loved that I'll risk loving too.
 I know how fear builds walls instead of bridges;
 I'll dare to see another's point of view.
 And when relationship demand commitment,
 Then I'll be there to care and follow through.**

**Your kingdom come around and through and in me;
 Your power and glory, let them shine through me;**

**Your Hallowed name, O may I bear with honor,
And may Your living Kingdom come in me.
The Bread of Life, O may I share with honor,
And may You feed a hungry world through me.**